

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

*Please AMEND the paragraph at page 9, line 28 to page 10, line 4 to read as follows:*

Preferably, though not necessarily, the hot agar solution is cooled to an intermediate temperature above the gelling point of the agar solution prior to performing step b). In a preferred embodiment, which is simple and economic to practice, the agar-restraining polymer solution is mechanically dispersed in the cold hydrophobic liquid by using a rotating agitator. Using this method, the gel bead size can be controlled by selecting the rotation speed of the agitator.

*Please replace the existing abstract with the replacement abstract set forth on the following page:*